

VZCZCXRO4523
PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHLU #0691/01 2471727
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 031727Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY LUANDA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5001
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 LUANDA 000691

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [AO](#)
SUBJECT: THE NITTY GRITTY: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE ANGOLAN
ELECTORAL PROCESS

REF: LUANDA 411

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Angola's legislative elections on September 5 represent the culmination of a massive logistical undertaking. The process has been sophisticated, imperfect, impressive, and chaotic. Ultimately, however, we assess that the electoral process will be viewed as a credible vehicle to express the will of the Angolan voters. End Summary.

¶2. (U) There will be 12,400 polling stations nation wide, each of which will have up to four voting tables staffed by a minimum of three and maximum of five polling agents. In addition, each table will have two electoral police, who are unarmed civilians tasked with controlling traffic in and out of the voting area. To prepare their staff, the National Electoral Commission (CNE) gave over 275,000 individuals a five-day training program. The EU observation mission told the Embassy that the length and duration of training far exceed international norms, but, nonetheless, there is concern that some staff members may have forgotten the training as it took place many weeks ago in some cases.

¶3. (U) The CNE began delivering basic supplies for the stations (tables, chairs, lamps, etc.) to the provinces in late July and the ballots, voting lists and other sensitive materials are to have been delivered on September 2. Polling stations will open nationwide on September 5 at 0700, with the staff arriving at 0500 to review the materials, seal the empty ballot boxes, and allow election workers and observers to vote before polls open to the public. Voting ends at 1800, but those in line prior to 1800 will be allowed to vote.

Voting Procedures

¶4. (U) As the general population comes to vote, the polling station staff first checks for ink on the right index finger, an indicator that the voter had previously voted, and then authenticates the voter's voter registration card checks off the name on the voter rolls. The ballot is paper and contains the name, flag, and initials of the parties in an order determined by lottery. After voting, the voter folds the ballot and drops it in a translucent, sealed ballot box. Polling station staff then dips the voter's right index finger in indelible ink, completing the voting process.

Poll Monitors and Observers

¶5. (U) Political party delegates (poll watchers) are allowed to monitor the voting and can inspect all electoral materials. Should they note any irregularities in the process, they must immediately notify the president of the voting table, who is also obliged to note the irregularity in the table's official record. Complaints that are not noted at the time of occurrence will not subsequently be further investigated by higher authorities. All party delegates must be properly accredited by provincial or municipal electoral

authorities; their credentials clearly note their party affiliation.

¶6. (SBU) Unlike the 1992 elections, civil society observers will be allowed to observe inside polling stations. They cannot make notes in the voting station, lodge official complaints with polling station staff, or in any way interfere with the voting process. Observers must also be officially accredited by electoral authorities.

Vote counting

¶7. (U) After the voting is completed, the president of each table counts all used and unused voting materials in full view of all at the polling station. If the number of names crossed off the registration list equals the number of ballots cast, then counting begins. If the number of names crossed off the registration list does not equal the number of ballots cast, then according to the electoral law the number in the ballot box overrides the registration list and counting also begins. The actual counting procedure starts with the table president opening and verbally calling out the selected party, or determining that a ballot is blank or null. These announcements are recorded by a second staff member, while the ballots are separated into piles by party. Finally, a third staff member recounts the votes in each pile and this is verified with the tally from the verbal scoring. Announcements are also confirmed by all political party delegates present. Once the counting at each table is completed, the head of the polling station tabulates the combined results and then posts the results from all of the

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tables at the polling station on the door of the polling station.

Complaints

¶8. (U) If a party delegate objects to the table president's decision about any ballot, (for example, that the ballot should not be considered null, or that another party was marked on the ballot), the complaint must be immediately stated; all disputed ballots are piled separately and will be reviewed at the municipal electoral office. Complaints that are not made at the time of counting will not be subsequently reviewed.

Tabulation

¶9. (U) The ballots, packed within double tamper-proof bags, then begin a three-tiered verification process. First stop is the Municipal Election Office (GME), where formal complaints by the party delegates are reviewed, which could, consequently, alter the final tallies from each polling station. The GME then transmits the results by fax to both the Provincial Election Commission (CPE) and the CNE control center in Luanda. Ballots are also transported to the CPE, which will verify and count special ballots and allow for a second round of complaints. Then these results, which conceivably could be revised due to review of complaints, are computerized for the final tabulation at the provincial level. These provincial results must be completed, transmitted to the CNE, and posted on the door of the office by seven days following the election (September 12). The final stop is the CNE in Luanda. The CNE takes a final look at contested issues and must declare the final results and parliamentary seat allocation by 15 days after the election (September 20.)

The Great Unknown: Special Ballots & Possible Delayed Polling

¶10. (SBU) Voters who are away from their assigned voting

station for a legitimate reason or who have lost their voter registration card will be allowed to vote by special tendered ballot. To accommodate these tender ballots, the CNE has given each polling station 15% more ballots than voters registered in its locality. Special ballots are placed in a sealed blank envelope, then in a cover envelope in which the voter's identification information is written; the package is then deposited in a separate ballot box. To enable station agents to account for all ballots at their table, at the end of the day the special ballot box will be opened and the number of envelopes counted, but the envelopes will not be opened. Special ballots will be opened only at the CPE, after the voter is verified to be registered voter. The need to verify and count special ballots and the logistical difficulty in transporting them to the CPE is one reason that the GRA extended the allotted time to announce results at the provincial level from 10 days to 15 days (reftel).

¶11. (SBU) Procedures for securing and counting special ballots remain unclear. There are clear international norms for these procedures: in order to maintain the secrecy of the vote and ensure that votes are counted towards the correct province, voters should be verified, the envelope then divided by province, i.e., all envelopes from voters who are registered in Luanda should go in one pile, Benguela in another, Huambo in another, etc., the cover envelopes then removed and all blank envelopes mixed together before opening and counting the ballots. The fact that these procedures have not been articulated by the CNE as late as two days before the election is troubling to political parties and to international and civil society observation groups.

¶12. (SBU) Another prospective issue is the potential for delayed polling for some polling stations. The electoral law states that, should a polling station be unable to open or have its operations interrupted for more than three hours due to security problems or other "incidents" (a word widely interpreted to include logistical problems such as delayed deliver of polling station materials), voting will take place within a period of eight days. If this occurs in a limited number of areas, such that the number of missing votes cannot impact the final tally, the CNE can announce the final results without waiting for these votes to be cast and counted. If, however, delayed voting occurs in a significant number of stations, the announcement of final results could be delayed up to eight additional days.

¶13. (SBU) COMMENT: In planning Angola's first election in 16 years, electoral authorities seek nothing less than a

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world-class electoral process. Nevertheless, there will be numerous logistical hitches and glitches on election day, though not so extensive as to invalidate the credibility of the process. END COMMENT
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